

Subject:
CIM-2

19
26 January 1954
Date: 11-17-78 By: 35

MEMORANDUM FOR: Colonel White

SUBJECT : Writing Guides to Improve the Quality of Agency Writing

1. Analysis of the study prepared by General Services Office, Tab A, on writing guides to improve the quality of Agency writing indicates it may be summarized as follows:

a. Much of the Agency writing is verbose, cumbersome in structure, and difficult to understand.

b. The illustrations of poor writing and the techniques for analyzing and improving them are taken from publications of other Government agencies.

c. The techniques used in these Government publications are predicated primarily on the writings of Rudolf Flesch and Milton Hall.

d. The published writings of these authors are applicable to any type of writing in any type of business without modification.

2. The analysis of this subject also indicates that:

a. The preparation of writing guides is not a true function of the Records Division of the General Services Office.

b. The T/O of the General Services Office does not include slots for this type of work or for this type of personnel.

c. If writing guides are to be developed, this should be the responsibility of the Office of Training rather than the General Services Office.

3. The study does not give consideration to the type of personnel who write most of the Agency correspondence, reports, and regulations. These are generally high level people with better than average education, business or professional background. They are capable of using and applying known techniques to writing without modification or adaption to their specific type of work. The published texts on effective writing contain all the techniques necessary to improve the quality of Agency writing. These may be purchased in quantity at a nominal cost. The adaption of this published material to Agency language would be an unjustifiable expense.

4. I agree with the conclusion of the study that the Agency would benefit by providing the staff with effective writing guides. I disagree with the proposed method of developing and providing these guides. Instead I suggest copies of published booklets on this subject, such as "Art of Readable Writing" by Rudolf Flesch, be obtained for distribution to and use by Agency personnel. I further suggest that this program be the responsibility of the Office of Training.

5. I recommend disapproval of the General Services Office study. I also recommend the Office of Training be requested to investigate the use of published texts on effective writing as a method of improving the quality of Agency writing.



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